

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A microscope system comprising:

a stage on which a specimen is placed;

an image forming optical system that forms an image of the specimen placed on the stage;

an image-capturing device that captures the image of the specimen formed by the image forming optical system;

a focused position detection device that detects a focused position along a Z-axis for the specimen based upon the specimen image captured by the image-capturing device; and

a focused position storage device that stores in memory the focused position detected by the focused position detection device, wherein:

the focused position detection device sets a search range centered around the focused position stored in memory at the focused position storage device and detects the focused position anew by causing the stage and the image forming optical system to move relative to each other over the search range thus set each time a focusing operation is executed; and

when the ~~wherein~~ a focused position of a first observation point stored in the focused position storage device is shifted from the first observation point to a second observation point, along an X-Y plane perpendicular to the Z-axis, the focused position detection device sets a the search range for the second observation point based on the stored focused position of the first observation point.

Claim 2 (Previously Presented): A microscope system comprising:

- a stage on which a specimen is placed;
- an image forming optical system that forms an image of the specimen placed on the stage;
- an image-capturing device that captures the image of the specimen formed by the image forming optical system;
- a focused position detection device that detects a focused position for the specimen based upon the specimen image captured by the image-capturing device;
- a focused position storage device that stores in memory the focused position detected by the focused position detection device, wherein:
 - the focused position detection device sets a search range centered around the focused position stored in memory at the focused position storage device and detects the focused position anew by causing the stage and the image forming optical system to move relative to each other over the search range thus set each time a focusing operation is executed; and
 - a reset operation detection device that detects a reset operation for resetting memory contents at the focused position storage device, wherein the focused position detection device sets the search range based upon the same focused position stored in memory at the focused position storage device every time a focusing operation is executed until the reset operation is detected by the reset operation detection device.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): The microscope system according to claim 2, wherein the reset operation detection device detects a removal of the specimen from the stage as the reset operation.

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): The microscope system according to claim 2, further comprising:

a housing in which at least the stage, the image forming optical system and the image-capturing device are housed, wherein

the stage includes a specimen platform on which the specimen is placed and a transfer unit that inserts the specimen platform into the housing and ejects the specimen platform from the housing via an opening formed at the housing; and

the reset operation detection device detects an eject operation through which the specimen platform is ejected from the housing as the reset operation.

Claim 5 (Withdrawn): A microscope system according to claim 1, wherein: if the focused position is not stored in memory at the focused position storage device when a focusing operation is executed, the focused position detection device detects the focused position over an initial search range set wider than the search range.

Claim 6 (Withdrawn): A microscope system according to claim 5, further comprising:
an initial position storage device that stores in memory an initial position of the stage which is obtained when the specimen is brought to be placed on the stage, wherein:

the focused position detection device moves the stage to the initial position stored in memory at the initial position storage device if the focused position cannot be detected over the initial search range.

Claim 7 (Withdrawn): A microscope system according to claim 1, wherein:

if the focused position cannot be detected anew over the search range that has been set, the focused position detection device moves the stage to the focused position having been stored in memory at the focused position storage device.

Claim 8 (Previously Presented): The microscope system according to claim 2, wherein:

the focused position detection device erases the memory contents at the focused position storage device once the reset operation is detected by the reset operation detection device.

Claim 9 (Withdrawn): A microscope system according to claim 1, further comprising:

a slide glass detection device that detects a replacement operation for replacing a slide glass used to hold the specimen;

an identification information detection device that detects identification information inherent to the slide glass and provided at the slide glass;

an identification information storage device that stores in memory the identification information detected by the identification information detection device; and

a control device that (1) stores the identification information on the slide glass detected by the identification information detection device and the focused position detected by the

focused position detection device in correspondence to each other into the identification information storage device if a removal operation for removing the slide glass is detected based upon a detection signal provided by the slide glass detection device and (2) reads out the focused position corresponding to the identification information on the slide glass detected by the identification information detection device from the identification information storage device and stores the focused position thus read out into the focused position storage device if a mounting operation for mounting the slide glass is detected based upon the detection signal provided by the slide glass detection device.

Claim 10 (Withdrawn): A microscope system according to claim 1, further comprising:
a contrast detection device that detects a contrast value of the image captured by the image-capturing device, wherein:

the focused position detection device detects the focused position for the specimen based upon the contrast value detected by the contrast detection device.

Claim 11 (Withdrawn): An autofocus device comprising:
a connection unit that connects with an image-capturing device, the image-capturing device capturing an image of a specimen placed on a stage in a microscope, which is formed via an image-forming optical system, and determining a contrast value of the captured image;
a focused position detection device that detects a focused position for the specimen based upon the contrast value obtained via the connection unit;

a storage device that stores in memory the focused position detected by the focused position detection device; and

a reset operation detection device that detects a reset operation for resetting memory contents at the storage device, wherein:

the focused position detection device (1) sets a search range centered around the focused position stored in memory at the storage unit and outputs a command for detecting the focused position anew by moving the stage along an optical axis of the image forming optical system over the search range thus set and (2) erases the stored contents at the storage device once the reset operation is detected by the reset operation detection device.

Claim 12 (Withdrawn): A microscope system comprising:

a focused position detection device that detects a focused position for a specimen;

a focused position storage device that stores in memory information related to the focused position detected by the focused position detection device;

a search device that determines a search range based upon the focused position information stored in memory at the focused position storage device and controls the focused position detection device so as to perform a focused position detection operation within the search range;

a reset device that resets the focused position information stored in memory at the focused position storage device; and

a control device that holds the focused position information in the focused position storage device once the focused position information is stored into the focused position storage

device until the reset device is engaged in operation.

Claim 13 (Withdrawn): A microscope system according to claim 12, further comprising:
a slide glass detection device that detects a replacement operation for replacing a slide glass used to hold the specimen; an identification information detection device that detects identification information inherent to the slide glass and provided at the slide glass; and
an identification information storage device that stores in memory the identification information detected by the identification information detection device, wherein:

if the slide glass detection device detects a removal operation for removing the slide glass, (1) the control device stores the identification information on the slide glass detected by the identification information detection device and the focused position information detected by the focused position detection device in correspondence to each other into the identification information storage device and (2) the reset device resets the focused position information in the focused position storage device; and

if the slide glass detection device detects a mounting operation for mounting the slide glass, the control device reads out the focused position information corresponding to the identification information on the slide glass detected by the identification information detection device from the identification information storage device and stores the focused position information thus read out into the focused position storage device.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): An autofocus control method adopted in a microscope comprising:

capturing an image of a specimen placed on a slide glass mounted on a stage;

detecting a focused position along a Z-axis for the specimen relative to an objective lens by using the captured image of the specimen;

storing the focused position into memory at a storage device; and

detecting the focused position anew by moving the stage and the objective lens relative to each other within a search range centered around the focused position stored in the storage device when an instruction for a focusing operation start is issued;

wherein when the focused position of a first observation point stored in the focused position storage device is shifted from the first observation point to a second observation point, along an X-Y plane perpendicular to the Z-axis, a focused position detection device sets a the search range for the second observation point based on the stored focused position of the first observation point.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented): An autofocus control method adopted in a microscope comprising:

capturing an image of a specimen placed on a slide glass mounted on a stage;

detecting a focused position for the specimen relative to an objective lens by using the captured image of the specimen;

storing the focused position into memory at a storage device; and

detecting the focused position anew by moving the stage and the objective lens relative to each other within a search range centered around the focused position stored in the storage device when an instruction for a focusing operation start is issued;

wherein information indicating the focused position stored in the storage device is erased once the slide glass is moved off an optical axis of the objective lens.